ten in a sequential file on secondary storage. After the help/dialog parameters have been written, control is returned to the application for termination processing.

The user is also given the capability to dynamically override the skill level at any time to obtain more help-/dialog information. The user is presented with a prompt to enter the skill level desired. The entered value is compared to acceptable values and overrides the previous or current skill level.

In summary, the invention provides a data base of help/dialog messages which may be uniquely addressed by function and skill level. The application does not need to be aware of the number of help/dialog messages available for each help/dialog function. The application tracks the amount of time the user has been away and after a predetermined amount of time resets the skill level to provide a more detailed information presentation. This allows someone who has been away from an application to be lead through the help/dialog information and become re-familiarized with the application again. In addition, the user's progress through an application is tracked, and once the user has been through the help/dialog information for any functional component of the application a preset number of times, the user is moved to a higher skill level and is unburdened from some of the help/dialog information. It is possible to extend the teaching of this invention to multi-lingual data entry systems where a user may substitute different language messages in the defined data structures discussed above.

Although a preferred embodiment of the invention has been described, those skilled in the art will recognize that this invention may be practiced with modification to meet particular applications within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

Having thus described out invention, what we claim as new and desire to secure by Letters Patent is as follows:

1. In a data processing application having a plurality of functional components and comprising a plurality of displays at least some of which include prompts for user input, a storage and a data structure, a method of presenting a different level of help/dialog for each said functional component to different users during execution of said data processing application comprising the computer performed steps of:

storing on said storage a plurality of levels of help-/dialog for each said functional component for which there is a display including prompts for user input, said levels ranging from more detailed for users with minimal experience with said data processing application to less detailed or different information for users with greater experience with said data processing application;

maintaining a record in said data structure on said storage of a number of times each said functional component has been accessed by each user;

detecting which one of said functional components is active based on what display is operative;

determining which one of said levels of the dialog for said operative display including prompts for user input should be displayed based on the number of times said user has accessed said functional component and which one of said levels of help should be displayed in response to a user request for help based on the number of times said user has accessed said functional component; and

activating a display of the help/dialog for said operative display.

2. The method according to claim 1 wherein the step of determining is performed by the steps of:

comparing the number of times one of said plurality of functional components is accessed to a predetermined threshold; and

when said predetermined threshold is exceeded, displaying a help/dialog which is less detailed.

3. The method according to claim 2 further comprising the steps of:

maintaining a record in said data structure of how many days have passed since one of said plurality functional components has been accessed on said storage; and

displaying a help/dialog which is more detailed after a predetermined number of days has passed.

4. The method according to claim 2 further comprising the step of deactivating the display of the dialog when the number of times one of said plurality functional components is accessed exceeds a second predetermined threshold.

5. The method according to claim 4 further comprising the steps of:

maintaining a record in said data structure of how many days have passed since said functional component has been accessed on said structure; and

reactivating said dialog after said record in said data structure of how many days have passed has reached a third predetermined threshold.

6. The method according to claim 2 further comprising the step of responding to a user command and deactivating the display of the help dialog.

7. The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of responding to a user command and modifying the help/dialog stored on said storage.

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